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Communication network

The present invention relates to a communication network for transporting calls and to a corresponding method of arranging a communication network.

Presently, telephone networks have come into use, which provide so-called intelligent network (IN) functions. One such intelligent network function is the possibility of so-called virtual subscriptions. This will be explained in connection with Fig. 3. Fig. 3 schematically shows a network 1 and physical or real subscriptions 2, which correspond to subscribers. Physical or real subscriptions are associated with a physical or logical line to the network. In other words, the physical or real subscription is associated with a predetermined access point to the network, be it a physical line as in a PSTN or be it a logical access point as in a mobile telephone system. As already mentioned, each such access-based subscription is directly associated with a subscriber.

Beyond this well-known arrangement that consists of physical subscriptions and a network for routing calls between these physical subscriptions, intelligent network functions provide new possibilities, such as virtual subscriptions, in which a subscriber has a subscription that is not associated with an access, however said

subscription appears to the other subscriptions like a physical or real subscription.

This is accomplished by providing processing means in switch nodes of the network, which react to specific triggering methods in calls. Such triggering methods may use numbers that are placed in front of regular calling numbers, i.e. similar to the form of an area code. When the component in a switching node that is responsible for recognizing specific triggering numbers detects such a number, a predetermined process is initiated, e.g. contacting a specific entity that handles the service functions in the network. This specific entity may then invoke the service corresponding to the detected triggering number and perform corresponding actions. Other triggering methods may use the calling party number or the incoming route the call takes to the switch.

With respect to the above-mentioned virtual subscriptions, one may distinguish between dialable and non-dialable subscriptions, as indicated in Fig. 4a and Fig. 4b. Fig. 4a schematically represents a non-dialable virtual subscription, which means that the subscription is designed for outgoing calls, i.e. can only place calls. In other words, the subscriber to this non-dialable virtual subscription may only place calls, but no one can call this subscription from the network.

Fig. 4b shows a schematic illustration of a dialable virtual subscription, which means that the subscription is only designed for incoming calls, i.e. the subscriber to this subscription may only receive calls using a number known in the public number plan.

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An example for a non-dialable subscription is an account-calling-card or a credit-card-calling service, where a subscriber dials a specific access number (this action invokes the service), and then the service itself collects an account number & PIN (personal identification number) in order to authenticate the virtual subscriber, thereafter the service helps place a call for the subscriber and performs a corresponding billing operation. As can be seen, the subscriber may only use this service to place calls, but cannot receive calls from other subscribers to the network. Examples for dialable subscriptions are free-phone and premium-rate-services. It should be noted that there may also exist services that are a combination of dialable and non-dialable subscriptions, such as so-called universal personal telecommunication (UPT), in which a subscriber to this service may both place and receive calls through the virtual subscription.

The possibilities of intelligent network functions are not restricted to virtual subscriptions, i.e. services associated with subscribers, but also extend to operations conducted by and for the network operator. Examples of this are the use of specific calling numbers or other information in a call for gathering statistical information for the benefit of the network provider. As an example, an intelligent network operation may be triggered by a specific area code during a specific period of time during the day, such that the network provider may evaluate how many calls are directed towards that area during that given period of time.

While the above-described intelligent network services and
possibilities greatly increase the performance of the
network, they also make the management more complicated,
because the number of possible situations in the network
greatly increases.

One aspect accompanying network management is that of lawful
call interception. The inclusion of call interception
functions in networks is required by law in many countries,
in order to enable to a state agency such as the police to
lawfully intercept calls in the network under predetermined
conditions. The classical call interception method is access-
based, i.e. calls of a specific subscriber are intercepted by
monitoring the switching node at that subscriber's access
point to the network. Another interception method is number-
based, i.e. specific numbers trigger an interception routine
in a given switching node carrying the interception function.
Another method involving IN includes that a service control
function (see later description of Fig. 1) sends an
indication to a service switching function, that monitoring
should take place. Such interception methods are e.g.
described in WO 98/36548 and WO 97/41678. WO 98/36548
describes providing a database in a network component, in
which relevant telecommunication data on subscribers to be
monitored are stored and can be transmitted to one or more
monitoring authorities. It is also mentioned to provide
monitoring profiles. WO 97/41678 describes a process for
monitoring a communications line, in which the call number of
a subscriber who is to be under surveillance is characterized
by an indication given to an agency authorized to monitor
calls, and a three-way-conference-call is set up involving
the subscriber under surveillance, a second party calling or
being called, and the agency authorized to monitor the calls.

EP 0 792 074 describes a method of providing a service in a switched telecommunication system and a suitable message interceptor. This document generally describes the concept of an intelligent network IN and the possibility of providing specific services that are generated under certain trigger conditions, e.g. translating a called number into a different number. EP 0 792 074 also specifically mentions the concept of automated call interception, in which call attempts from a list of subscribers are automatically intercepted.

WO 97 25828 describes a cellular telecommunications system having selectively associatable usage parameters. It discusses the possibility of providing a virtual subscription, which means that a user can select any available cellular terminal and make an outgoing call, in contrast to the conventional cellular system, in which a specific subscription is always associated with a specific terminal. The system of virtual subscriptions is created by having three separate registers, one associated with a user, one with a subscription and one with a terminal.

WO 97 42784 relates to a method and apparatus for facilitating law enforcement agency monitoring of cellular telephone calls. This document specifically addresses the problem that in some cellular systems the signaling protocols only transport two numbers in connection with the set-up of a cellular call. Often, this means that there is no identification of the calling party in the call set-up signaling information. In the event that the called party triggers a monitoring procedure by e.g. the police, this means that it is not possible to identify the caller.

In order to overcome this problem, WO 97 42784 suggests using the fact that a billing operation for the calling party takes place, and that this billing operation can be used to identify the calling party.

It is the object of the present invention to improve the manageability of a communications network that transports calls.

According to one aspect of the invention, this is achieved by a communication network having the features of claim 1 and by a method having the features of claim 26.

According to this first aspect, the communication network comprises a plurality of switching nodes and a service provision means, where said service provision means provides predetermined services in the communication network. A part of said service provision means is provided in at least one of the plurality of switching nodes. Furthermore, the service provision means is arranged to provide at least one service according to which the service provision means may set up calls in the switching node containing a part of the service provision means. In other words, non-dialable virtual subscriptions are provided. According to the invention, the service provision means adds user identification information to the call data of a call being set up, where the user identification information identifies the user requesting that the call be set up.

The term "call data" refers to all data in the switch related to a call, and preferably the user identification information is added to appropriate signaling information from a service control function to a service switching function. The user identification information may or may

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not be part of the connect data. The connect data is the
data the switch uses to set up the call to the next
exchange or direct destination.

In this way, it is possible to identify the subscriber,
even if that subscriber is using a non-dialable virtual
subscription. This increases network manageability, as it
is possible to identify at the switching layer all
subscribers using the network. More specifically, physical
or real subscribers are already identified by their
specific calling number, subscribers to dialable virtual
subscriptions are also typically identified by the number
to be dialed and, in accordance with the present invention,
the subscribers to non-dialable subscriptions in an
intelligent network system are also identifiable at the
network switching layer.

This is especially advantageous in connection with the
lawful interception or monitoring of telephone calls. As
already mentioned previously, it is often necessary to
provide for the monitoring of subscribers to a network.
Previously it was however not possible to intercept a
monitoring target using a non-dialable virtual subscription
before call connect, i.e. during the phase preceding the
in-band communication between two or more subscribers.
Moreover, such a process of "listening in" on the in-band
authorisation procedure for a virtual subscription call is
complicated and produces a great amount of overhead. The
call set up by the conventional non-dialable virtual
subscription did not contain any information on the
subscriber behind the call. The connect information will
typically contain data on the terminals being used, because
for the communication, the information transported is

based on the physical subscriptions (e.g. the calling number of the actual telephone being used). This information will however usually not help in identifying the actual user, because typically non-dialable services are ordered from a terminal not associated fixedly with a user, such as e.g. a hotel telephone. The present invention is very advantageous in comparison thereto, because the information identifying the subscriber behind the non-dialable virtual subscription is contained in the call data given by the IN service to the switch, such that an interception may be performed by monitoring the call set up data in well-known ways.

There are many ways of adding the above-mentioned user identification data to the call data, e.g. by changing the protocol for call data by adding a new specific field identifying user identification information, or by exploiting unused fields in known call protocols. The exploitation of unused fields in established protocols has the important advantage that no new standards have to be created and a complete compatibility with existing systems is retained. The coding of the user identification information can also be done in any appropriate way, e.g. by a number scheme, by other identifiers, or by adding a completely new specific message to uniquely identify the subscriber.

According to a second aspect of the present invention described in claim 27, a capability is provided, according to which changes in user data of virtual subscriptions is communicated to a monitoring agency under predetermined conditions. This makes the monitoring capabilities of the

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network more effective, because changes in the user profile can be detected.

The above mentioned first and second aspects are preferably combined.

The features and advantages of the present invention will be better understood from the following detailed description, in which reference is made to the accompanying figures.

Fig. 1   shows a schematic illustration of parts of the communication network;

Figs. 2a and 2b

show a communication between a service switching function and a service control function;

Fig. 3   is a schematic illustration of a network containing physical and virtual subscriptions; and

Figs. 4a and 4b

illustrate the concept of non-dialable and dialable virtual subscriptions.

In the following, a detailed embodiment of the present invention will be described. In order to avoid unnecessary repetition, the introductory portion of the present application is incorporated into the disclosure of the invention.

Fig. 1 shows a switching node 3 containing call control functions (CCF) 31 and 33. The call control function is the basic function for call control and switching node, e.g. routing, charging etc. Furthermore, a service switching function (SSF) 35 is provided in the switching node 3. The service switching function 35 is a part of a service provision means for intelligent network services. The service provision means furthermore comprises a service control function (SCF) 72, a service data function (SDF) 71 and a service management function (SMF) 8. In the example of Fig. 1, the service data function 71 and the service control function 72 are provided at a service control point 7.

It should be noted that the individual functions shown in Fig. 1 are logical entities, which may correspond to physical entities, but this is not a necessity. In other words, the individual functions may be contained in individual physical components, but they may also be implemented together in any desirable way. In this sense, certain functions depicted as entities in Fig. 1 may actually be physically spread out over separate physical units. For example, it is possible that the service switching function 35 is distributed over a plurality of switching nodes and the service control function 72 may serve a plurality of service switching points.

The intelligent network action provided by the service provision means is invoked by the service switching function 35 detecting predetermined service triggering information in the connect data of a call. To this end, the service switching function 35 will typically have an associated storage means (not shown) that contains the

triggering information, e.g. specific call numbers or
number combinations. An example of triggering information
is a specific set of numbers positioned like an area code,
e.g. 0130 for toll-free calls in Germany. Once the service
switching function 35 has detected one of the stored
triggering numbers, a service invocation operation is
conducted. In the course of this operation, the service
switching function 35 contacts the service control function
72. The communication between the service switching
function 35 and the service control function 72 is
conducted in accordance with a so-called intelligent
network application protocol (INAP). This protocol
constitutes an interface and consists of a set of models
(e.g. final state machines, FSMs) that describes the state
and behaviour of the involved entities (e.g. SSF and SCF),
and a set of operations that allows the service control
function 72 to give instructions to the service switching
function, and allows the service switching function 35 to
report the occurrence of events to the service control
function 72.

The service control point 7 will typically be separated
from the switching node, and a plurality of service
switching functions in a plurality of nodes will be
connected to the centralized service control point 7. Fig.
1 only shows one service switching function for the sake of
simplicity.

The service control function 72 controls the actions
invoked by the triggering of the service switching function
35. The service control function typically also includes
service and subscriber data profiles. This will be
explained in more detail with reference to Figs. 2a and 2b.

The service data function 71 stores relevant data on
services provided by the service provision means, and user
data associated therewith. In other words, the service data
function 71 may provide the service control function with
data.

In Fig. 2a, the service switching function, after having
detected predetermined triggering information in the call
connect data of a call being routed by the switching node
3, sends the trigger number and other parameters, e.g. a
service key, to the service control function 72. The
service control function processes this data appropriately,
and determines which service is being invoked and how the
call is to be handled. In the example of Fig. 2a the
invoked service relates to the routing of the call, such
that the service control function 72 provides a connect
command to the service switching function 35, which
contains the destination routing address. An example of
such a service is the dialing of a toll-free number that
does not correspond to a physical line or destination.
Much rather the service control function must provide the
switching node 3 with routing information for routing the
call to an appropriate physical destination.

As already mentioned previously, it is equally well
possible that the triggering information or triggering
number only corresponds to the registration of information
in the service control function 72, as shown in the example
of Fig. 2b. In the example of Fig. 2b, the service
switching function is triggered just as in the case of Fig.
2a, however the service control function 72 responds
thereto by simply sending a continue-operation-command,
such that the service switching function 35 in the

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switching node 3 routes the call to the destination
originally indicated in the call. An example of the
operation shown in Fig. 2b is if the network provider
wishes to gain statistical data on specific call
information, e.g. on called numbers during certain times of
day, on certain calling party numbers, etc.

The service provision means also comprises a service
management function 8. The service management function
controls the updating of the data in the service control
function 72 and the service data function 71 and the
updating of the control routines of the service control
function 72.

In accordance with the present invention, when the service
invoked by the triggering information in a call is a non-
dialable virtual subscription, the service control function
72 automatically adds user identification information to
that call triggering that service. In other words, user
identification information is sent from the service control
function 72 in an appropriate command, similar to the
command shown in the bottom part of Figs. 2a and 2b.

The user identification information can be in any desired
form. In other words, it is possible that the user
identification information is simply a number associated
with the user, but it can also be more complicated. As an
example, it is possible that the home telephone number of
the user is employed as a user identification number, but
it is equally well possible that each service user is
assigned a unique number which at the same time also
identifies the service. In other words, according to a
preferred embodiment, the service control function 72 not

only sends user identification information to be added to
the call, but also sends service identification information
to be added to the call by the service switching function
35. The user identification information and service
identification information may be one piece of data (i.e.
one number), or two separate pieces of data.

The user identification information or service
identification information is transported from the service
control function 72 to the service switching function by
the above-mentioned intelligent network application
protocol (INAP). In other words, the INAP will specify a
specific format and field for this user identification
information and service identification information.

The service switching function 35 will then add this
information to the connect data of the call having invoked
the intelligent network operation described above. This can
be done in a number of ways. As a preliminary remark, it
should be mentioned that the call connect data is specified
by an appropriate call connect protocol peculiar to the
network. This protocol will specify the format and fields
for call connect information, such as the called party
number (CdBN), the calling party number (CPN), the
originally called party number (OCN), the redirecting
number (RDN), etc. As an example, such information will be
sent in frames, where the call connect protocol specifies
an identifier for the type of data being transported in the
header of the frame, such that any component in the network
will be able to identify what kind of data is contained in
the frame, and the protocol will also specify how the data
is coded, such that the component is able to determine the
data.

Typically, the call connect protocol will also specify such
addresses or fields in these frames, which are not used by
said call connect protocol. While the fields reserved by
the protocol may only be used as specified by the protocol,
the non-reserved fields may be used in an individual way by
individual implementations without running into conflict
with the protocol.

A first possibility of adding the user identification
information or the service identification information to
the call connect data, is to define a specific header
identifier and field or address for said information. In
other words, this means changing the standard of the call
connect protocol.

Another possibility is to only change the implementation of
the call connect protocol in such a way that the fields not
used by the standard protocol are employed for transporting
the user identification information and the service
identification information. This concept has the advantage
that the standard for the call control does not need to be
changed, and a full compatibility to existing standards is
retained.

Another possibility of adding the information is to
manipulate the already existing call connect data. In other
words, it would be possible to change one of the used call
connect numbers, such as the calling party number (CPN) or
other appropriate data in the call. However, the
possibilities of manipulating call connect data of the call
triggering the intelligent network operation is typically
restricted by telecommunication regulations, so that this

concept has the disadvantage of not providing unlimited
degrees of variation, but nevertheless has the advantage of
being fairly simple to implement.

Due to the addition of the user identification information
and possibly the service identification information, the
communications network of the present invention increases
the manageability of the network on the network switching
layer. This will be explained in detail with respect to the
preferred embodiment of performing a call interception
operation at the network switching level.

Very specifically, Fig. 1 shows lawful interception
functions (LIF) 32, 34, 42 and 52. These lawful
interception functions are respectively associated with
corresponding call control functions 31, 33, 41, 51. The
lawful interception functions will contain a storage means
in which interception trigger information is stored, such
that when such interception triggering information is found
in the call connect data of a call being routed by the call
connect function, the lawful interception function will
initiate an interception operation. Preferably, the lawful
interception function is implemented as a part of the call
control function.

The arrangement of interception functions at the switching
layer, i.e. in conjunction with the call control function,
and not in connection with the intelligent network
functions, has the advantage of increased security. More
specifically, there are many INAP standards and many
variants of service control points. Many of these
variants are based on general purpose computers. There is
also a trend to distribute the service control function in

many types of nodes with different purposes. From a data
security point of view, a general purpose computer is more
difficult to protect, according to the strict regulation
required by the intercept function. Here, an implementation
of the interception function on the network switching layer
provides advantages.

The various lawful interception functions all are arranged
to communicate with an interception management system (IMS)
6, where said interception management system 6 contains a
database for storing data collected by the lawful
interception function, i.e. call data of intercepted calls,
and the interception management system controls and updates
the contents of the lawful interception functions, such
that the lawful interception functions are provided with
the interception triggering data necessary for their
operation. Furthermore, the operation routines of the
lawful interception functions may be updated via the
interception management system 6. The communication between
the interception management system 6 and the lawful
interception functions is illustrated by dashed lines in
Fig. 1, which indicates that this information is provided
to one or more LIFs by the IMS.

As can be seen in Fig. 1, preferably a lawful interception
function is associated with each call control function.
This, however, means that an interception operation may be
invoked more than one time by a single call. To accommodate
this situation, the lawful interception functions output
call data in chronological order, and said call data is
linked by a correlation number, such that the interception
management system is capable of acting accordingly. The
call interception operation performed by the lawful

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interception function may consist in a number of actions.
One typical possibility is that a three-way conference call
will be set up, namely between the calling party, the
called party and a monitoring agency identified in
association with the triggering information for that
specific call, where naturally the three-way conference
call is arranged in such a way that neither the calling
party nor the called party are aware thereof. In order to
guarantee that only one three-way conference call will be
arranged for a given call, the interception operation can
suppress the successive, unnecessary conference calls.

The interception operations can be triggered by any
appropriate interception triggering information. In other
words, this can e.g. the called party number, the calling
party number, or the subscriber identification information
(and possibly service identification information) added in
accordance with the present invention. In this way, any
subscriber or user may be monitored, even a subscriber of a
non-dialable virtual subscription. More specifically,
standard subscribers to the network, which do not use any
of the intelligent network possibilities, may be
intercepted by the usual call connect data, such as the
called party number, the calling party number or the access
line monitoring. Equally, users of a dialable virtual
subscription can be intercepted by the number of said
virtual subscription, which typically identifies the
subscriber. In accordance with the invention, it is also
possible to intercept calls during the customer control
phase of subscribers using a non-dialable virtual
subscription, because the service-provision means adds
subscriber identification information to the call set up to
the non-dialable virtual subscription. The lawful

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interception functions simply need to be supplied with the
subscriber identification information as an interception
triggering information, in order to enable the lawful
interception function to intercept such calls to a non-
dialable virtual subscription by a subscriber who is
targeted for monitoring.

As already mentioned previously, the service providing
means comprising the service switching function, service
control function, service data function and service
management function typically stores service and user
related data in the service control point 72 and the
service data function 71. Usually, a method is provided,
such that a user may change his user profile defined by his
user data stored in the service control function 72. The
access to the user data may be provided in a number of
ways, e.g. via the communications network, i.e. the service
switching function 35, the INAP and the service control
function 72, or via the service management function 8. It
may be noted that the access to the service management
function can e.g. be provided via the Internet. Also, it is
possible that the service provider modifies the user data
via the service management function 8.

In accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present
invention, measures are taken such that a monitoring agency
may become aware of changes in the user data and service
data. The simplest possibility of doing this, is to grant
the monitoring agency direct and unlimited access to the
service management function 81, e.g. via desktop
integration, where the monitoring agency may view the
actual forms that also the network operator uses to
administer the subscriber profiles. In an alternative

embodiment, the monitoring agency is notified by the
service management function 81 if a change in user and/or
service data has occurred. Preferably, the notification
message will also contain information on the user whose
data has changed, and which data has been changed.
Alternatively, it is also possible that the service
management function comprises a list of users to be
monitored, and only notifies the monitoring agency when the
data of a user mentioned in the list has changed.

Another possibility of selectively making the monitoring
agency aware of changes in the user and service data, is to
implement an activity indicator, which is to be sent from
the concerned intelligent network element, i.e. the service
control point 7, via INAP to the switching network, any
time that any change of user data takes place in the
service data function 71. The list of monitoring targets is
stored in the form of interception triggering data in the
lawful interception function, and said lawful interception
function is arranged to respond to said activity indicator
by checking to see if the user indicated in the activity
indicator corresponds to a monitoring target identified by
interception triggering information. If the user whose data
has changed is a monitoring target, then an appropriate
message identifying said user and possibly identifying the
changes can be sent to the monitoring agency by the lawful
interception function.

According to another embodiment, an activity indicator as
mentioned above may be sent from the concerned intelligent
network element through the interception monitoring system
6, where a list of monitoring targets is already stored.
The interception monitoring system 6 then decides if an

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appropriate message shall be sent to the monitoring agency.
Again, as in the previous cases, an indication of which
data has changed may also be sent to the monitoring agency.

As an alternative to all of the above embodiments in which
information on the changes is sent to the monitoring
agency, it is equally well possible that, when a message is
sent to the monitoring agency that the data for a specific
user has changed, then the monitoring agency is granted
full access to said user's data in the service data
function 71.

Although the present invention has been described above in
terms of a detailed example, this description of a detailed
example serves to help a skilled person to completely
understand the invention, and is not intended to restrict
the scope. Much rather, the scope of the present invention
is defined by the dependent claims. Reference signs in the
claims are intended to increase legibility and also do not
restrict the scope.